

No One's Watching

Tess, 8A

Nobody's looking at you, I tried to reassure myself as I walked down the endless hallway. It didn't matter how many times I repeated this to myself because I would never be able to believe it. I was sure I could hear people whispering my name as I walked by. I could feel them staring at me. I kept my eyes on the ground, not daring to meet anyone's gaze.

"Amber!" I heard someone call from behind me. Last year I would have turned around and answered them, but today I quickened my pace and focused on making it to my first period class without confronting anyone. I pulled the crumpled piece of paper from my bag and squinted at the small writing. Room 236, Mr. Gold. I glanced quickly to my right at the nearest classroom, room 214. 22 more classrooms I thought to myself and grimaced.

I cradled my stomach, suddenly feeling sick as I walked into class. I hadn't told anyone outside of my family that I was pregnant. I had barely talked to anyone from my school since I found out that I was pregnant. For most of the summer I sat around my house, afraid to show my face (and stomach) outside. I didn't want anyone to see me like this; I didn't want anyone to know me as the pregnant Amber. But my parents had forced me to go to school. I walked slowly through the aisles of desks, trying to find the best spot where I could easily be ignored. I started to make my way to the far back right corner and hesitated as I felt everyone's gaze follow me as they were all suddenly silent.

"Amber!" Clara, one of my best friends called from her seat in the middle of the room. She gestured to the empty seat beside her, but I shook my head, keeping my

eyes down, and continued to walk to the back of the room. Clara frowned, confused, but turned around and continued chattering. I took my seat at the back and kept my eyes on my desk, determined to draw no attention to myself.

I wasn't paying attention for any of the class; I spent my time to thinking of ways to avoid confrontation with people. I was sure that, even though most people had their eyes towards the front of the classroom, their minds were somewhere else. Wondering, coming up with new gossip to spread about me. There were a few people who kept glancing back at me throughout class. It was obvious I was pregnant; anyone could see my stomach bulging out. I wanted to look up and glare at them sometimes, but I knew I wouldn't be able to look them in the eyes, once I read their expression.

I practically ran out of class the moment the bell rang. The rest of my classes went on like the first, people whispering and staring as I sat at the back of the room. As I walk out of my last class for the morning, I realize I have lunch now; there was no way of avoiding that.

I kept my eyes down as I hurried through the hallways to my locker. As I pass people I hear parts of their conversations, and more than half of them had the words "Amber" and "pregnant" in them. I glared at the ground. This was not what I wanted to be remembered as.

As I hurried through the halls, glancing up every few seconds, I spotted Victoria. In every class there's that girl that thinks she's all that, who thinks that she can control everyone else, who thinks she's in charge of everything. In my class, Victoria was that girl, except, she wasn't the only one who thought so highly of herself. Everyone else did to; she could order everyone else around. She glared at me, and started walking towards me.

"Amber," Victoria said in a sarcastic tone. She gave a small, sly smile to the girls at her sides. She flipped back her hair, "I'm sure you've been getting a lot of sympathy from people," she continued, glaring. "But you should know," she paused, "you won't be getting any from me." She glared at my bulging stomach and laughed, the girls at her sides copying her.

I walked slowly into the cafeteria, trying not to meet anyone's gaze. I spotted one table in the back, hidden in shadows. I hurried to the back table and was relieved to see that I was the only one sitting there.

"Is this seat taken?" A soft voice said from beside me. I looked up to see a petite strawberry blond girl smiling. "I'm Jill."

"Amber." I mumbled, "No one's sitting there."

Jill talked on and on about the town she moved from, and her old school, and lots of other things that I'm sure I didn't hear because I was barely paying attention. It seemed strange to me that Jill hadn't once glanced at my swollen stomach, or even mentioned it. She barely seemed to notice I was pregnant.

"Is something wrong?" Jill suddenly stopped, "You look surprised."

"Sort of," I said. "You're treating me like everyone else."

"And?" Jill looked confused.

"I'm pregnant!" I said a little too loud. "Everyone's been gossiping and staring at me all day."

"So?" Jill said, a smile starting on her face. "I've met pregnant girls before. The gossip will die down in a few days. People will get bored of it." She paused. "You're just like everyone else, everyone makes mistakes." I thought about this for a little while, and I believed her, with her persuasive tone and understanding eyes. Maybe I was just like everyone else.

As I walked out of the cafeteria that day, I didn't feel like everyone's eyes were on me. They were on everyone who had made mistakes, and tomorrow, everyone would gossip and watch someone else. I felt that now, I was accepted into my class again. I was just like everyone else. And for a moment, I even forgot I was pregnant.